

Week Ending Friday, December 22, 2000

**Statement on the Fiscal Year 2000
Budget Agreement**

December 15, 2000

I am pleased that Congress and I have reached agreement on a budget for the coming year. It is a budget that is fiscally responsible, pays down the debt, and makes vital investments in our Nation's future. In education, health care, and community renewal, this budget provides more opportunity for more Americans than ever before.

First and foremost, this budget tops 8 years of commitment to education with dramatic new investment in our Nation's schools. This includes an historic \$1.2 billion initiative to help renovate classrooms in thousands of school districts across the country. It includes the largest increases ever in funding for the Head Start program. It nearly doubles funding for after school programs—the largest increase ever. It increases by 25 percent funding to meet our goal of hiring 100,000 new, highly qualified teachers to reduce class size in the early grades. It dramatically expands our GEAR UP and TRIO programs to prepare young people for college. It increases the maximum Pell grant to an all-time-high of \$3,750—part of the biggest expansion of college opportunity since the GI bill. And it boosts accountability with more funding for teacher training and for turning around failing schools. With this budget, we have now increased funding for the Department of Education by 76 percent since 1993—and targeted that funding to programs that work.

Second, in this budget, we're also passing our historic bipartisan new markets and community renewal initiative—the most significant effort ever to help hard-pressed communities lift themselves up through private investment and entrepreneurship. With the help of our new markets tax credit, 40 strengthened empowerment zones, and 40 renewal communities, this initiative will spur

billions of dollars in private investment and ensure that every American will share in Nation's economic prosperity.

Third, this budget reaffirms our long-standing commitment to expand access to quality health care for all Americans. It includes a multibillion dollar effort to provide low-income children, seniors, and people with disabilities, and those leaving welfare for work, with health care coverage. It expands preventive benefits like cancer and glaucoma screenings for Medicare beneficiaries. It ensures quality health care services for those beneficiaries by investing approximately \$30 billion in hospitals, home health agencies, hospices, nursing homes, and managed care plans. It will establish a new program to provide families caring for aging and ill relatives with essential support services, such as adult day care. It includes a new program to provide people with disabilities with community-based health care services. It increases funding for AIDS prevention, research, and treatment at home and abroad. It boosts support for graduate medical education at children's hospitals and for food safety efforts. It includes new efforts to improve nursing home quality and a downpayment to eliminate racial health disparities. And it includes a historic \$20.3 billion investment in biomedical research, nearly doubling since 1993 our investment in the National Institutes of Health.

Finally, this budget will allow nearly 700,000 immigrants who have worked, lived, and paid taxes in America for years to stay in the United States legally without fear of being separated from their families.

Every year since 1993, I have worked with Congress to craft fiscally responsible budgets that are true to our values and that invest in the capacity of the American people to seize the new opportunities of the 21st century. This year's budget does the same—by continuing to pay down the debt and invest in education, research, health care, and other priorities. I am confident that this budget will

help keep our progress strong and our prosperity going in the years ahead.

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Statement on the Northern Ireland Peace Process

December 15, 2000

I am delighted that loyalist paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland have today committed themselves to an open-ended cessation of hostilities and developed peaceful mechanisms to address disputes that may arise. This action responds to the overwhelming desire of the people of Northern Ireland to see their peace flourish and endure, which I sensed during my visit this week. I congratulate the loyalist political leaders who I know worked so hard to bring this about.

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

December 16, 2000

Good morning. This week, as I work to conclude the last budget negotiations of my Presidency, I'm reminded how far we've come these past 8 years. We now live in a time of unprecedented peace and prosperity. But we didn't get there by accident. We made tough choices, based on core values of opportunity for all, responsibility from all, and a community of all Americans.

Today I want to talk about two elements critical to our continued success: first, our progress in moving people from welfare to work; and second, our continuing commitment to fiscal discipline and a budget that puts our people first.

Vice President Gore and I took office in 1993 with a pledge to end welfare as we know it. Thanks to comprehensive welfare reform, a renewed sense of responsibility, and the strongest economy in a generation, millions of former welfare recipients now know the dignity of work.

Today I am pleased to announce that over the past 8 years we've cut welfare caseloads by more than 8 million people. Last year alone 1.2 million parents on welfare went to work, determined to build better lives. Nationwide over the last 8 years, welfare rolls have dropped nearly 60 percent and now are the lowest in more than 30 years.

We've been able to sustain this progress year after year because Government, the private sector, and welfare recipients themselves all have done their parts. Together, we are finally breaking the cycle of dependence that has long crippled the hopes of too many families.

When we enacted landmark welfare reform in 1996, I insisted that Congress provide incentives to reward States for helping people to find jobs and to keep jobs. Today I'm pleased to announce that 28 States will receive a total of \$200 million in bonuses for doing just that. These grants will enable States to help even more parents go to work and succeed on the job. I urge States to use these resources to provide the necessary support—from child care to transportation to training—that can make a critical difference between welfare checks and paychecks.

We've also worked hard to help families leaving welfare meet the challenge of affordable health care. In the bipartisan budget package I will soon sign, we will extend Medicaid coverage so that thousands of parents who leave welfare can keep the health coverage protecting them and their children. This budget also includes funding to help cover more uninsured children, speed coverage for patients with Lou Gehrig's disease, and increase payments to hospitals, teaching facilities, home health agencies, and nursing homes in order to ensure quality health care.

We have also secured an extra \$817 million to help working families afford child care, to meet their responsibilities both at work and at home. These and other child care resources will serve over 2.2 million children next year.

In this budget, we're also passing our historic new markets and community renewal initiative, the most significant effort ever to help hard-pressed communities lift themselves up through private investment and entrepreneurship. With the help of our new-